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ABSTRACT

Counselors and visiting teachers serving special education students face unique problems in meeting the needs of those students. The general and specific knowledge that the counselors and visitng teachers should have in order to work most effectively with students with special needs has been the focus of a study sponsored by the Texas Education Agency. The study seeks to define the roles and to identify the competencies, both shared and unique, of counselors and visiting teachers who serve exceptional children and their families. Topics discussed are: planning and evaluation, pupil appraisal, instructional delivery, special supportive services, parent counseling and involvement, coordination and utilization of community resources, inservice education, and guidance and counseling. (Author/JLL)

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Working With The Handicapped: The Counselor and The Visiting Teacher

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Texas Education Agency
201 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

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Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) non-discrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) non-discriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex;

(6) non-discriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and/or Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

INTRODUCTION

Counselors and visiting teachers serving special education students face unique problems in meeting the needs of those students. The general and specific knowledge that the counselors and visiting teachers should have in order to work most effectively with students with special needs has been the focus of a study sponsored by the Texas Education Agency. Agency consultants, recognized experts in public school education, and representatives from universities in Texas collaborated on a project to find and delineate the specific knowledge and specialized skills.

THE GOAL of this publication is:

To define the roles and to identify the competencies, both shared and unique, of counselors and visiting teachers who serve exceptional children and their families.

SHARED COMPETENCIES

I. Planning and Evaluation

- assist in developing a system for review and modification of the total program of services for exceptional children
- assist in developing a system to provide information throughout a child's educational program based upon that child's individual needs
- participate in the research, evaluation, and planning of the district's total guidance and special education programs
- assess needs and evaluation strategies periodically to determine the effectiveness of the student programs
- develop a system for collection of data pertinent to professionals' job performance

II. Pupil Appraisal

- assist in identifying pupils with special needs that require referral services
- assist in identifying community referral agencies
- assist in the identification, assessment, referral, and placement of children for whom no public school program is currently available

- serve as liaison between referring person or agent and the school's referral committee

- serve as a member of the admission, review, and dismissal committee

III. **Instructional Delivery**

- provide input to the curriculum and participate with other school personnel in establishing an instructional plan

- act as consultant to teachers in areas of the personal/social interaction of the child

IV. **Special Supportive Services**

- participate in the development of preventive programming

V. **Parent Counseling and Involvement**

- assist parents of special education pupils in developing realistic perceptions of their children's aptitudes and development as related to education (school progress) and personal/social development

- assist family members in adjusting to the exceptional child's needs and in helping him or her to work with the teacher constructively

- interpret the philosophy and rationale of special education regarding comprehensive services available through the Plan A program

- assist in interpreting results of appraisal and implications as they relate to parents, educational programming, and home management of the child

- provide information to parents regarding nature of various handicapping conditions, causes, treatment, and remediation

VI. **Coordination and Utilization of Community Resources**

- recruit, assist, and act as a catalyst in the development of resources within the community to meet the needs of students and their families

- utilize knowledge of the special services provided by the school and by community agencies for referrals

- establish and maintain communication between the family, the serving agency, and the school to accomplish the appropriate educational aspirations of the student

- interpret policies and programs of community agencies to school personnel

- interpret policies and programs of the school to community agencies
- assist parents and students in the use of community agency services
- develop and coordinate reports and case conferences with school personnel and community agencies on a continuing basis
- participate in community activities as a representative of the school
- evaluate referrals to community agencies to avoid unnecessary delay or inappropriate contacts which result in less effective services to children
- identify community resources and maintain a file, in an updated and easily retrievable form, of resources that exist for handicapped children
- maintain appropriate contacts, both personal and professional, with community representatives, individual agencies, and institutions

VII. **Inservice Education**

- participate in inservice staff development and related activities with the team of professionals serving the student and family

- serve as a member of the admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee

- provide faculty and administrators with information regarding educational opportunities for handicapped students outside the local school setting

- interpret the findings of research concerning exceptional children to the staff and other agencies involved in special education

- provide programs on a continuing basis to inform professionals of legislative mandates

- provide information to personnel to assist them in guiding the personal and vocational development of the child in special education

- provide staff development training for teachers and administrators in human growth and development

- provide consultative services to staff on group techniques, interpretation of cumulative record information, and career awareness

VIII. **Guidance and Counseling**

- confer with school administrators and members of the school fac-

ulty about curricular offerings appropriate to the needs of exceptional children

- assist all school personnel in developing skills to deal with wider variations in student behavior
- determine the cause of and remediate cases of poor attendance

COUNSELOR

I. **Planning and Evaluation**

See Shared Competencies

II. **Pupil Appraisal**

- bring to the attention of the referral committee students suspected of needing special services based upon *behavior* rather than labels
- provide the referral committee and the admission, review, and dismissal committee with appraisal data through such means as academic records, standardized test scores, classroom observation, anecdotal records, and other information
- assist in the implementation of the student's individualized educational plan, as directed by the admission, review, and dismissal committee

III. **Instructional Delivery**

- assist teachers in understanding and using guidance materials and processes in the classroom
- assist with groups of students or individual students in regular classrooms who are "marginal identification referrals" when counseling services are appropriate and recommended
- provide programs and opportunities to help the special education child to develop and maintain a positive self-concept

IV. **Special Supportive Services**

- assist curricula development specialists in affective curriculum development
- coordinate with psychologist, visiting teacher, and other related services staff

V. **Parent Counseling and Involvement**

- provide information sessions for parent groups on nature of handicap
- provide individual and group sessions for parents to discuss feelings that exist because of child's handicap

- collect and disseminate to parents information concerning curricular offerings and opportunities for further education and training

VI. **Coordination and Utilization of Community Resources**

See Shared competancies

VII. **Inservice Education**

- interpret the findings of research concerning exceptional children to the staff and other agencies involved in special education

VIII. **Guidance and Counseling**

- provide for individual and/or small group counseling
- provide for group guidance activities to improve student self-understanding and interpersonal relationships
- provide assistance in enhancing student's self-concept and in student's overcoming personal and social problems arising from placement in special education
- provide information to students on economic and vocational trends in the community
- assist every student in developing a realistic career plan by helping

students to relate their interests, aptitudes, and abilities to current and future educational and occupational opportunities and requirements, long-range educational plans, and career services

- assist pupils in obtaining information about education and occupational opportunities in the military service
- provide appropriate guidance materials for use by teachers and other professional personnel
- assist pupils and parents in procedures for making applications for post-secondary education
- assist pupils and parents in finding and applying for financial aid for post-secondary education
- provide appropriate pupil data to staff members working with all students (including special education pupils) taking care to maintain confidentiality while conforming to open records legislation
- periodically review all confidential records and remove information not necessary for decisions about the child (information no longer appropriate or relevant)

VISITING TEACHER

I. **Planning and Evaluation**

See Shared Competencies

II. **Pupil Appraisal**

- locate children in the community who are not provided adequate educational services and report these children to appropriate school personnel
- assist in the students' comprehensive appraisal by providing sociological data and developmental information on the referred child
- assist in staff meetings for identified special education students placed in nonpublic school settings

III. **Instructional Delivery**

- assess neighborhood patterns, social class, and cultural and ethnic differences in order to act as a consultant in these areas
- provide information to teachers which will help strengthen home/school relationships

IV. **Special Supportive Services**

- participate in the development of a transportation system for special education students
- serve as liaison between school or community health services and parents
- serve as liaison between the school nutrition services and parents

V. **Parent Counseling and Involvement**

- secure information from home to facilitate better understanding and management of the child in school
- establish and maintain communication and cooperation between the family and school personnel to ensure completion of the child's educational program
- assist in establishing a program of activity for the home with specific suggestions for working with the child
- provide information to school personnel concerning student and family educational needs
- help identify needs in the school, home, and community which affect a student's school adjustment

- assist family in accepting and in utilizing special help for the student
- assist parents in expressing their concerns to appropriate school personnel
- provide information to parents regarding child growth and development and how it relates to social adjustment and educational progress of the pupil in the school setting
- demonstrate and communicate to the family the interest of the school in understanding and meeting the special needs of the pupil
- assist special education pupils and their families in becoming aware of services of the school, community, and various state agencies
- provide information about services to help families in periods of crises and/or emergencies
- identify services available to parents with out-of-school children
- provide appropriate special materials to parents
- provide assistance to parents of preschool severely handicapped and multihandicapped children

VI. **Coordination and Utilization of Community Resources**

- coordinate educational services for specific children

VII. **Inservice Education**

- interpret the findings of research concerning sociological information to the staff and other agencies involved in special education
- present basic awareness information to persons at community and agency meetings

VIII. **Guidance and Counseling**

- make community citizens aware of the need for viable vocational education opportunities for students within the community
- assist family in accepting student's career choice